

# What Is an Influenza Pandemic?

A pandemic is a global disease outbreak.

An influenza pandemic occurs when a new influenza virus emerges that humans have little or no immunity to, it begins to cause serious illness and then spreads easily person-to-person worldwide.

## History of Major Flu Pandemics:



1918: Spanish Flu—Killed more than 500,000 people in the US.

1957-58: Asian Flu—approximately 70,000 deaths in the US.

1968-69: Hong Kong flu—killed approximately 34,000 people in the United States.

## How will Pandemic Flu affect you?

An influenza pandemic will disrupt our daily lives. Certain precautions should be taken before an outbreak and many precautions and restrictions may be in place during an outbreak.

Necessary precautions during an outbreak may include:

- Restricting large gatherings
- Restricting travel
- Closing schools and child care centers
- Voluntary Isolation and Quarantine
- Wearing a mask
- Working from home

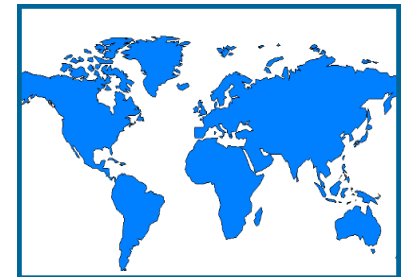
Additional preventative and planning information is available at [www.coconino.az.gov/health.aspx](http://www.coconino.az.gov/health.aspx)



Coconino County Health Department  
2625 N. King Street  
Flagstaff AZ 86001  
928-522-7800  
1-877-522-7800

7/06

## Information about Pandemic and Avian Flu



Provided by the  
Coconino County  
Health Department  
928-522-7800  
Toll free 1-877-522-7800



---

## What is Avian Influenza (Bird Flu)

Avian influenza - commonly called "bird flu" - is an infection caused by influenza viruses that occur naturally in birds.

Wild birds can carry the viruses, but usually do not get sick from them. However, some domesticated birds, including chickens, ducks, and turkeys, can become infected, often fatally.

One strain of avian influenza, the H5N1 virus, is occurring in Asia and has spread into Europe and Africa. H5N1 is one subtype of highly pathogenic avian influenza. This strain of avian influenza has not yet been found in North America.

Strains of avian H5N1 influenza may infect various types of animals, including wild birds, pigs, and tigers. Symptoms in birds and other animals vary, but highly pathogenic strains can cause death within a few days.

---

## How do people become infected?

Direct contact with infected poultry, or surfaces and objects contaminated by their feces, is presently considered the main route of human infection. To date, most human cases have occurred in rural areas in Asia where many households keep small poultry flocks. The virus is not transmitted to humans through properly cooked food.

---

## Is an Influenza Pandemic a Real Possibility?

Pandemics have occurred periodically throughout history, every 30 years on average. Past pandemics have varied in their severity but history shows that pandemics can result in many deaths and social disruption. While there is no way to determine when a pandemic may occur, advanced planning is important to ensure our community is prepared in the event of an outbreak.



## What is the status of vaccine development and production?

Vaccines effective against a pandemic virus are not yet available. Vaccines are produced each year for seasonal influenza but will not protect against pandemic influenza. Although a vaccine to protect humans from the H5N1 virus is under development in several countries, no vaccine is ready for commercial production and no vaccines are expected to be widely available until several months after the start of a pandemic.

Antivirals are medications that destroy or inhibit the growth of viruses. Antivirals are in short supply and should not be stockpiled due to shelf life limitations and may not be effective against ever-changing influenza viruses. Also, taking antivirals when they are not needed may reduce their effectiveness for when you really need them.

---

## Individual and Family Preparedness

*Protect yourself and your family...*

### Have a Plan

During a pandemic, you or your family may need to stay at home for several weeks. Make a plan with family and friends that includes:

- Who could help with food and supplies if you and your household are ill.
- The telephone numbers of people who live near you, as well as your doctor's phone number.
- Check with your employer to find out if you can work from home.
- Create an emergency supply kit that includes a supply of food and water, prescriptions and medications, flashlight, portable radio, supplies for your pets, toilet tissue, diapers, etc.

### Protective Measures

One of the most important protective steps during a pandemic is avoiding infection. You can help prevent the spread of infection by:

- Washing hands frequently.
- Using hand sanitizer when washing your hands is not possible.
- Covering your cough.
- Cleaning surfaces such as door handles, phones, and computer keyboards.
- Getting a seasonal flu shot to protect yourself from the seasonal flu and to keep your immune system healthy.